

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8855

INFO AMCONSUL KADUNA

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SUBJECT: NIGERIAN REACTIONS TO CHAD COUP

SUMMARY: TWO OF NATION'S LEADING DAILY NEWSPAPERS, DAILY TIMES AND NEW NIGERIAN, HAVE USED CHAD COUP TO THROW EDITORIAL DARTS AT FMG AND CONTINUATION MILITARY RULE IN NIGERIA. END SUMMARY

1. DAILY TIMES, IN APRIL 15 ISSUE, REVIEWS EVENTS LEADING TO COUP AND EXTENT OF OPPOSITION TO FORMER PRESIDENT TOMBALBAYE, BUT NOTES "ARMY RULE SHOULD BE AN EXCEPTION AND NOT THE RULE", SOMETHING TO BE RESORTED TO AFTER CONSTITUTIONAL MEANS OF CHANGING "UNPOPULAR GOVERNMENT HAVE BEEN EXHAUSTED." IT ADDS "MILITARY COUP IN CHAD IS OF SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE AS A REMINDER OF FATE THAT AWAITS THIRD WORLD LEADERS WHO CLING TENACIOUSLY TO POWER AS WELL AS MILITARY REGIMES WHICH PERPETUATE THEMSELVES IN OFFICE UNDER GUISE OF BEING CORRECTIVE." AFRICA HAS LITTLE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN CIVILIAN AND MILITARY REGIMES AS BOTH "EPITOMISE THE AFRICAN'S INSATIABLE LUST FOR POWER." EDITORIAL ENDS WITH PLEA FOR "PEACE, STABILITY AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT" IN AFRICA, AND EXPRESSES HOPE CHAD'S NEW ARMY STRONGMEN WILL "GET LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THEIR PRIORITIES RIGHT: THEY SHOULD CORRECT THE ANOMALIES

FOR WHICH THEY HAVE STAGED THE COUP AND RETURN TO THEIR BARRACKS."

2. NEW NIGERIAN EDITORIAL APRIL 16 ECHOS THESE THOUGHTS AND ENDS WITH FOLLOWING PARAGRAPH; "WE SEE NO ALTERNATIVE FOR AFRICA TO A REPRESENTATIVE AND RESPONSIVE SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT CHOSEN BY THE PEOPLE IN A FREE AND FAIR ELECTION. IT IS THE ONLY SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT THAT CAN BE CHANGED PEACEFULLY."

3. MEA SPOKESMAN, ON BACKGROUND BASIS APRIL 15, TOLD NIGERIAN OBSERVER FMG VIEWS CHAD SITUATION "AS PURELY THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF THAT COUNTRY." FMG IS AWAITING REPORT FROM ITS EMBASSY ON COUP BEFORE MAKING ANY FURTHER COMMENT.

4. COMMENT: NIGERIAN PRESS, WHICH IS INVOLVED IN RUNNING FEUD WITH FMG OVER PRESS FREEDOM, OBVIOUSLY VIEWS EVENTS IN CHAD AS IDEAL OPPORTUNITY TO REMIND FMG THAT MILITARY RULE IS CONSIDERED - AT LEAST BY PRESS TO BE TEMPORARY SITUATION, WITH CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT PREFERRED. THIS LINE IS ALMOST IDENTICAL TO ONE TAKEN BY PRESS AT TIME OF COUP IN NIGER, SO THEME IS NOT NEW. WE EXPECT NO FURTHER COMMENT FROM FMG ON CHAD COUP.
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